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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/11/2017

TAGS: MARR MOPS PGOV PREL IZ NO

SUBJECT: NORWAY CONSIDERS WHETHER TO ASSIST IN IRAQ

REF: A. STATE 3592

¶B. OSLO 30

Classified By: Kevin M. Johnson for reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. In a January 11 meeting, the Ambassador briefed MFA State Secretary Raymond Johansen on the President's Iraqi speech. The Ambassador highlighted that success is critical for Iraq, for the region and for the world and emphasized the focus on reconstruction and reconciliation-issues of particular interest for the GON. Johansen appreciated the briefing and welcomed key parts of the strategy. He said the GON will continue to try to promote Iraqi religious dialogue and would at least look at the issue of reconstruction assistance for Iraq. In addition to this meeting, the Ambassador reviewed the plan with the Iraqi Ambassador to Norway and Post highlighted the speech through its website. End Summary.

Briefing on the Speech

¶2. (C) With the Foreign Minister in Madrid and the Prime Minister unavailable today, the Ambassador met with MFA State Secretary Johansen to deliver ref a points on the President's

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Iraqi speech. The Ambassador highlighted that success is critical for Iraq, for the region and for the world. The current situation is unacceptable, hence the new strategy which stresses leadership by the Iraqi government with strong support by the US. The Ambassador outlined the political, economic, diplomatic and security aspects of the plan. He emphasized the focus on reconstruction and reconciliation-issues of particular interest for the GON. He closed stressing that we all have a lot at stake in Iraq and that we hope Norway will participate in the International Compact for Iraq and offer its development expertise in Iraq. He also urged them to be publicly supportive of the new policy.

¶3. (C) Johansen thanked the Ambassador for the briefing and welcomed the fact that more troops was just one element of an overall plan. He also welcomed the focus on Anbar, calling it a bold but necessary step. He agreed that it is up to the Iraqis to start true reconstruction. He noted with interest the plan calls for the Iraqis to resume talks with Syria and Iran. Both sides discussed the disruptive role Iran is playing and the linkages among conflicts in the Middle East. Johansen also appreciated the reference to Turkey's concerns, which he thought was key in keeping Iraq from breaking apart.

Norway Looking at Reconciliation and Reconstruction

¶4. (C) Turning to Norway's role, Johansen noted that the GON helped facilitate a meeting of Iraqi religious leaders in Oslo in December. Those leaders said they never talked together in Iraq, but in Norway were able to do so even though they are very far apart on the political/religious

spectrum. The GON will continue to try to promote religious dialogue, an area where they have particular experience.

¶ 15. (C) Johansen also thought religious centers in the Middle East (Mecca, An Najaf, Qom) could play a greater role by issuing Fatwahs against killings. He questioned the lack of willingness by regional players to press this point. The Ambassador noted the Secretary will have an opportunity to discuss some of these concerns when she starts her trip January 12.

¶ 16. (C) Finally, Johansen promised the GON will also look at reconstruction assistance for Iraq, although they have had little involvement so far. He reiterated the point made earlier this week (see ref b) that the GON's highest priorities in the Middle East are the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Lebanon. But, he said they would consider Iraq's needs.

#### Other Outreach

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¶ 17. (C) The Ambassador spoke to the Iraqi Ambassador to Norway Bamarni (who is currently resident in Sweden) and encouraged him to speak to the GON and the media about the hopes and aspirations of the Iraqi people. While Bamarni did not have instruction from the GOI, he is thinking of coming to Norway next week and asked for assistance with media contacts. Post will compile names and contact details for him. Post is also linking the President's speech and accompanying documents to its website where it will be introduced by a short quote from the Ambassador explaining why Norway should focus on Iraq. Post also corresponded with the top aid agencies in Norway to alert them to the key elements of the speech and encourage them to do more in Iraq.

WHITNEY